

had their own wrongs and grievances to vindicate, and were at this moment closing up their ranks for the destruction of institutions synonymous in their eyes with intolerable oppression. These wrongs and grievances found terrible voice in the "Beggars' Summonds." This summons to a pampered Church to deliver up its ill-gotten and worse-applied gear for the benefit of the poor man is nothing less than a revolutionary manifesto, straight from the popular heart—one of those passionate outbursts resonant throughout the ages in which misery appeals to God and man for justice. It was addressed from the blind, crooked, bedridden, widows, orphans, and all other poor so visited by God that they cannot work, to the flocks of friars within the realm, from whom they seek restitution of wrongs by-past and reformation in time to come. It claimed the endowments, which these monks have squandered in self-indulgence, and have misused to support superstition and idolatry, as the property of the nation. They have forfeited it by the law of God, the law of nature, the law of the land, and therefore, if they do not disgorge it by Whitsunday next, the people will take possession and eject them as usurpers and robbers of its heritage. "Let him, therefore, that before has stolen steal no more, but rather let him work with his hands that he may be helpful to the poor. — From the whole cities, towns, and villages of Scotland, the 1st day of January 1558."

The attack on the monasteries in Scotland is usually represented as the work of "the rascal multitude," and even Knox himself says so. The rascal mob was at any rate in grim earnest, if this effusion may be taken as an indication of its spirit. And the rascal mob, it is evident, had ample cause for action, and showed more method in its madness than its modern critics have seen. Art might suffer, but morality and justice certainly gained from the rude vindication of the warning here given. It is only as we realise the stern spirit which thus welled up against the sham religion of the day in Scotland in this year 1558-9 that we can understand the scenes of tumult and vandalism that were to follow. It was certainly not a "rascal" spirit that penned this document, or turned adrift a legion of lazy, sensual monks out of their corrupt heritage.